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Mrs. Annie Besant and the Leadbeater advice

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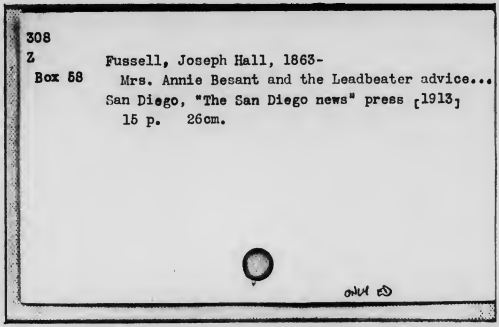

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Mrs. Annie Besant and the Leadbeater Advice

by

Joseph H. Fussell

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Box 58
Mar 1919

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MRS. ANNIE BESANT
AND THE
LEADBEATER ADVICE

"I hold that there is sufficient evidence to show that the complainant (Mrs. Besant) supported the Leadbeater practice."

From Judgment in the case, Mrs. Besant vs. Dr. T. M. Nair, delivered by the Senior Presidency Magistrate, Madras, India.

BY
JOSEPH H. FUSSELL
Point Loma, California, U. S. A.

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MRS. ANNIE BESANT AND THE LEADBEATER ADVICE

On May 8, 1913, in the Madras Presidency Court, the Senior Presidency Magistrate rendered his decision in three "alleged defamation" suits, two of which had been instituted by Mrs. Annie Besant against Dr. Nair, the writer of an article **Psychopathia Sexualis** complained of by her, and Dr. U. Rama Rao, the publisher of the same, and the third brought by Mr. Schwarz (a member of Mrs. Besant's society then resident at her Adyar Headquarters) against the editor and publisher of **The Hindu**, for republishing the article. The Senior Presidency Magistrate in rendering judgment declared in all three cases: "I find that no case has been made out against the accused and he is discharged," and further found that the article was written in good faith and for the public good.

Mrs. Besant then appealed for a revision of the Magistrate's order, which appeal was heard in the Madras High Court before Hon. Justice Ayling, who found no ground for further inquiry and dismissed the petition.

But Mrs. Besant is not satisfied, even though before appealing she had addressed a letter "to all Theosophical Journals in the World" in which she committed herself and her "persecutors" to divine care: "To His justice and His mercy I leave my persecutors and myself," she declares, "repeating the words said to have been spoken by the Christ: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" So, having left the whole matter—I mean her "persecutors" and "herself to His justice and His mercy," and having called for forgiveness upon their heads, she proceeds to make a quite lengthy statement in the **Adyar Bulletin**, republished in a supplement to the **Madras Standard**, September 16, 1913, a copy of which is before me. In this she refers to a little publication called **The Theosophic Voice**, (published in America) and also to certain "tracts," circulated in Madras and elsewhere "from Point Loma." I quote her exact words:

> It may be that, deluded by the filthy publication called the **Theosophic Voice** which was only produced to libel and died after three issues, Dr. Nair—brought into touch in his medical practice with much disease arising from vice—honestly believed that he was unveiling a sexual monster.
>
> Dr. Nair never made the smallest inquiry of me as to my views or as to the value of the **Theosophic Voice.** Another curious coincidence was that a quantity of obscene tracts were circulated in Madras and elsewhere from Point Loma; this * * * [and here Mrs. Besant names a former English official in India] very generously told me at the time but the tracts were not sent to me.

It should be known that Point Loma is about 10 miles long and from 2 to 4 miles wide and that there are many residents on Point Loma in no way whatever connected with the International Theosophical Headquarters, and probably in no way whatever interested in Mrs. Besant or her doings. The extreme end of Point Loma is a U. S. Government Reservation on which is a fort and barracks with several companies of Coast Artillery. What was Mrs. Besant's object in being so vague?

Mrs. Besant is not very explicit in regard to the "tracts" from Point Loma (save in her characterization of them as "obscene"). As however, the name Point Loma is closely associated in the public mind with the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society which is the continuation of the original Theosophical Society founded by Mme. H. P. Blavatsky, and as further Mrs. Besant is reported as having testified in Court that the same English official had brought to her attention a copy of the pamphlet, **Mrs. Annie Besant and the Moral Code**, it seems quite clear that it is this

pamphlet of which she speaks when she refers to "tracts" from Point Loma, a still further reason for this conclusion being that this pamphlet quotes from the **Theosophic Voice** above mentioned.

Mrs. Besant's Characterizations Declared False

Now I hold no brief for the **Theosophic Voice**; I consider the editor of that high-purposed and estimable little journal well able to answer for herself and for her magazine; but as I am the author of the pamphlet, **Mrs. Annie Besant and the Moral Code**, I take this opportunity of referring to both. Mrs. Besant characterizes the former as "filthy" and the latter as "obscene." Both characterizations are false, though both the journal and the pamphlet (or tract) deal very frankly with an unpleasant subject.

I wonder if Mrs. Besant realizes the full import of her words when she characterizes the **Theosophic Voice** as "filthy," and the "tract" by which I assume she means the pamphlet, **Mrs. Annie Besant and the Moral Code**," as "obscene." The subject matter of both, though much more is given in the former than in the latter, is Mr. Leadbeater's advice given to certain boys, and his conduct with some of them, with comments and extracts from letters and documents bearing on these, none of the testimony therein published having been, so far as my knowledge goes, disproved or shown to be false, though most bitterly and strenuously denied. It is therefore interesting to note that inferentially at least, since Mrs. Besant characterizes these publications as she does, her characterization must also extend, and must apply even more strongly to Mr. Leadbeater's advice and conduct, viz. that they are "filthy" and "obscene." It is the only possible inference and rather a remarkable comment, unintentional no doubt, on her part, on what she elsewhere declares to be his noble life and pure character!

That the **Theosophic Voice** "was only produced to libel" is likewise false; and the fact that only three issues were published perhaps, merely and very eloquently, shows that the main purpose of this little Journal was accomplished, apparently very much to the chagrin and discomfiture of Mrs. Besant. For in addition to an exposure of the Leadbeater advice and practice it was a protest against Mrs. Besant's laudation and endorsement of the man, and against his readmission to her society. The Editor of the Journal, whom I never met personally, was at the time of its publication still a member of Mrs. Besant's society—never having been a member of the original society, but trying to eliminate from the society of which she was a member those menacing conditions which she felt constituted a grave danger. It was a hard battle that she fought against apathy and laissez-faire and opposition and persecution from Mrs. Besant's adherents, and it caused a breakdown in health, but she fought nobly and in a just cause and for such there is ultimately no defeat.

Where Was Mrs. Besant's Foresight?

One cannot help but wonder where was the intuition or foresight or wisdom we expect to belong to an "initiate," a "spiritual teacher"; one with whom Leadbeater claims he has stood in the presence of the Supreme Director of evolution on this globe (!) who claims she can read the mind of the Logos; and of whom Mr. George S. Arundale has declared "we know that she will become one of the greatest rulers of the world, ruler of gods and men" (!) Surely, in the face of all this, one cannot help but wonder why Mrs. Besant did not show a little more foresight and nip in the bud, as it were, that "filthy publication" and those "obscene tracts" so "generously" brought to her attention, she claims, by an English official in India.

Mrs. Besant is evidently not very desirous of recalling the fact, or perhaps does not wish it to be known, that this "tract" was brought to her attention in practically every city she visited and that it confronted her wherever she went, on her long lecture tour in the United States of America in 1909. Why did she not then demonstrate before the world that her sublime and beautiful faith in the noble character and pure life of her "fellow initiate" were well-founded? And where was the chivalrous and "pure-minded" Leadbeater all this time not to come forward to vindicate, no, not himself, of course that would be immaterial, but to vindicate his "fellow initiate's" so oft-expressed opinion of him?

If this little Journal was produced only to libel, think how easy it would have been for Mrs. Besant to have proved this, especially as (which I understand to have been the case) there were several of those most nearly interested who would have willingly testified in Court. Or did Mrs. Besant think that she and her fellow initiate could live down the whole unpleasant affair?

The **Theosophic Voice** was published in 1908, just three issues, no more; but it has lived to take a prominent part in the "alleged defamation" cases in Madras in 1913, and will live on for many generations to come as a noble effort on the part of the editor and its supporters to purge the society to which they belonged from all possible suspicion of endorsing such teaching and practice as that advocated by Leadbeater, and as a protest against the readmission of this man back into their midst.

"Mrs. Annie Besant and the Moral Code"—Its Purpose

As for the pamphlet, **Mrs. Annie Besant and the Moral Code**, its main purpose was to protest against the baseless assertion (context or no context) of Mrs. Besant that "the Theosophical Society—she evidently seeking to imply the original Theosophical Society—has no moral code" and, as stated in the pamphlet itself:

> To call the attention of the public to what I hold is a danger to public morals; to call attention to the fact that Mrs. Besant and those of her followers who support her in her defense of Mr. Leadbeater are in no way to be considered as identified with the Theosophical Movement.

I said further:

> Mrs. Besant and her society have endorsed a self-confessed teacher of self-abuse to innocent boys. This man has been readmitted to Mrs. Besant's society, welcomed back as Mrs. Besant says "with honor."
>
> One of the highest officials in Mrs. Besant's society, the American General Secretary and member of the society's Supreme Council, has declared that:
>
> "The introduction of this question into the thought of the Theosophical world is but the precursor of its introduction into the thought of the outer world . . . . . No mistake was made by Mr. Leadbeater, etc."
>
> It is to bring these things to the attention of the public and to the attention of the public press, that this pamphlet has been written, as the quickest way in which to put a stop to this threatened propaganda of corruption.

And on the cover of the pamphlet is the following:

> A PROTEST: Addressed to the Public, to Fathers and Mothers, to all Lovers of the Home; to all self-respecting men and women—lovers of decency and saneness of life.

Let Mrs. Besant characterize it as she may in her effort to defend herself in her dilemma, it has in part at least accomplished its purpose, it has helped to make clear the distinction between the true Theosophy of

Madame Blavatsky, William Q. Judge and Katherine Tingley, and the pseudo-Theosophy of Mrs. Annie Besant, between the pure teachings of the Wisdom Religion and their counterfeit. Mrs. Besant has asserted that the pamphlet is full of falsehoods; she has said there is a falsehood on the cover, viz: the attributing to her the statement, "The Theosophical Society has no Moral Code," which she says "is made to convey a lie." She has not been able to prove the "lie" and cannot, and later I shall have something more to say in regard to Mrs. Annie Besant and the Moral Code.

Mrs. Besant's Explanation Declared False

I wish now, however, to speak further regarding Mrs. Besant's endorsement of Mr. Leadbeater and of her oft-repeated claim that she has never deviated from her disapproval of his advice. First let us look at some of Mrs. Besant's latest words. In her statement published in the Adyar Bulletin above referred to and in the Supplement to the Madras Standard of September 16, 1913, she says:

> In order to make the matter clear I may premise that Mr. Leadbeater had given certain advice to a few boys, in an attempt to rescue them from evil habits; when this came to my knowledge in 1906, I strongly disagreed with it, a disagreement steadily maintained from that day to this . . .
>
> . . . .All that Mr. Leadbeater had done was to advise a very few boys who had fallen into bad habits and could not break them off at once to break them off gradually. He has never at any time, as Dr. Nair said, taught them the evil habit spoken of. To try to rescue those already in the grip of evil is the whole of his offence; his own simile was that when a man has been poisoned with arsenic a doctor continues to give him for a time reduced doses in order to save his life. Out of this the whole foul accusations have been built up.

Note that Mrs. Besant insists on saying "a very few boys," but Leadbeater before the committee of inquiry, over which Col. Olcott presided, admitted that he gave the advice to "several."

Now I propose to show that the above is a wholly false statement except, of course, that Mrs. Besant has expressed disagreement with the advice referred to. I propose to show first that it is contradicted by the testimony presented in Court, and elsewhere given; second, that it is contradicted by Mrs. Besant herself in other statements; and third, that it is contradicted by Mr. Leadbeater's own admissions. And if this be true then I ask to what extent are Mrs. Besant's words worthy of credence in other particulars, and other matters.

Mrs. Besant Contradicted By Testimony.

First. As to the testimony: The affidavit of the boy D. P. (one of the Exhibits in the alleged defamation suits) absolutely and wholly contradicts Mrs. Besant's statement that Mr. Leadbeater gave this advice "in an attempt to rescue boys from evil habits;" and that all that he did "was to advise boys who could not break them off at once to break them off gradually." And the affidavit of this boy has not been disproved or shown to be in any way false. In fact it stands as wholly contradictory of Mrs. Besant's statement. Then there is the testimony of two boys, given by Mrs. Dennis in her letter of Jan. 25, 1906, accompanying the original charges made against Mr. Leadbeater. According to that letter one boy said to his mother, "Mr. Leadbeater told me that it would make me strong and manly." (See what Mr. Leadbeater himself says, quoted later, corroborating this). The other boy, when asked what excuse Mr. Leadbeater gave for such conduct, said: "Mother, I think that was the worst part of the whole thing. Somehow he made me believe it was Theosophical." Then there is the statement of Mr. Herbert Burrows of London:

> So we have the terrible fact of these innocent boys being taught self-abuse unknown to their parents, under a pledge of secrecy and because the teaching was Theosophy, by a Theosophical teacher who is claimed as a seer and an Initiate, under whose charge their boys were, and who regularly took them to sleep with him, although they strongly objected, and begged for a separate room, as I have actual proof.

And lastly we have the statement of Dr. van Hook, then one of the highest officials in Mrs. Besant's society which statement has the endorsement and sanction of Mrs. Besant herself, in **Notes of a Meeting** published in **The Link** and introduced as an exhibit into Court in the "alleged defamation" suit brought by Mrs. Besant against Dr. U. Rama Rao. In these "Notes" Mrs. Besant declares the Doctor's action was "inspired"; "the gist of what was said by Dr. van Hook was under high influence." Mrs. Besant acknowledged in Court the correctness of these Notes and their accuracy. In answer to the question, "You sign at the end of the article as O. H." she replied, "Yes, it shows that the article has my sanction and its accuracy;" and Dr. van Hook himself claimed the highest possible authority for his statement.

Dr. van Hook's Defense of Leadbeater.

In the course of his statement Dr. van Hook declared:

> Now it was most easy for Mr. Leadbeater with clairvoyant vision to see what thought forms were hovering about certain boys not yet addicted to this degrading practice . . . . Yet the "crime" or "wrong" of teaching the practice alluded to was no crime or wrong at all, but only the advice of a wise teacher, who foresaw an almost limitless period of suffering for his charge if the solution for his difficulties usually offered by the world, were adopted and relief obtained by an associated instead of an individual and personal act.
>
> The introduction of this question into the thought of the Theosophical world is but the precursor of its introduction into the thought of the outer world. . . . No mistake was made by Mr. Leadbeater in the nature of the advice he gave his boys. No mistake was made in the way he gave it.

In connection with this last, I suggest that all who have access to the court records should read the affidavit of the boy D. P., also Mrs. Dennis's letter and Mr. Burrows' statement. And note in particular that Dr. van Hook speaks of this practice as "degrading," and in the same breath says that it was no crime or wrong to teach it, but "only the advice of a wise teacher," etc. Does it not seem that all who in any way try to defend this practice or, as in the case of Mrs. Besant, try to defend one who is guilty of teaching it,—does it not seem that they lose all sense of proportion and of the fitness of things?

In every way these statements contradict Mrs. Besant's statement that Mr. Leadbeater gave his advice only to those

> who had fallen into bad habits, and could not break them off at once, to break them off gradually."

Mrs. Besant Contradicted By Herself.

Second. Mrs. Besant's statement is contradicted by herself in other statements; but this is nothing new, for at one time she says "the Theosophical Society (hers) has no moral code" and at another time, she declares it has. But now as to this particular statement, let us look first at the statement itself without going outside to consider others. In the first paragraph quoted above, Mrs. Besant says she has, from the first up to

now, strongly disagreed with Mr. Leadbeater's advice. In the second paragraph she says:

> All that Mr. Leadbeater had done was to advise a very few boys who had fallen into bad habits and could not break them off all at once, to break them off gradually.

Mrs. Besant says, "a very few boys," but Leadbeater admitted he gave the advice to "several."

Now she premises that the boys could not (COULD NOT, note the phrase) break away from those bad habits at once, i. e., that they did not have the power to do so, and that therefore Mr. Leadbeater advised them to do so gradually; and she says she has always disagreed with this advice, i. e., to break off gradually from bad habits when it could not be done all at once. Elsewhere, in her letter "To all Theosophical Journals in the World," dated May 10, 1913, Mrs. Besant says:

> As the idea that I approve of the advice given is absolutely false and may do incalculable harm I here place again on record the fact that from the first moment I heard of it in February, 1906, I expressed my strong disapproval. . . . I regard the advice he gave in a few cases as most mischievous and dangerous.

And yet she declares this man, Leadbeater, of whose advice she so strongly disapproves, is on the threshold of Divinity(!) It would appear that to be an Initiate, on the threshold of Divinity, is no guarantee that the advice of such an one may not be "most mischievous and dangerous."

And to think of "fellow initiates," standing on the threshold of Divinity, not being able to agree on such a simple matter according to Mrs. Besant's explanation of it, viz., the proper advice to give to a poor boy who had fallen into bad habits!

Let us now restate the above defining the advice in the words of Mrs. Besant, and remembering that this advice, viz., to break off bad habits gradually was given, according to her, only in a very few cases, to those boys who had fallen into bad habits and could not (could not) break them off at once. We then read:

> As the idea that I [Mrs. Besant] approve of the advice to break off bad habits gradually, in cases where it is impossible to break them off at once, is absolutely false, and may do incalculable harm, I here place again on record the fact that from the first moment I heard of this advice to break such habits off gradually, in February, 1906, I expressed my strong disapproval. . . I regard the advice viz., to break off bad habits gradually in those cases where it is impossible to break them off all at once, as most mischievous and dangerous. . . . . To try to rescue those in the grip of evil is the whole of his offence; his own simile was that when a man has been poisoned with arsenic a doctor continues to give him for a time reduced doses in order to save his life, but from the very first I have regarded such advice as most mischievous and dangerous.

It sounds a little bit ridiculous, does it not?—the idea that her approval (which she absolutely refuses to give) of the advice to break off bad habits gradually may do incalculable harm. But Mrs. Besant in **Notes of a Meeting** above referred to, published in **The Link**, says:

> I have stated in my public letter to the T. S. (hers) that the advice given by Mr. Leadbeater, given only in a few special cases, was the only advice practicable in those cases.

The Court's Comment.

Commenting on this statement, viz., that the advice "was the only practicable advice in those cases," the Senior Presidency Magistrate in rendering his judgment said:

> The complainant (Mrs. Besant) in her cross-examination first denied having said so, but afterwards admitted that the idea of those lines is in page 8 of Exhibit B, [her letter to members of her society] which is one of the pamphlets referred to by the accused.

And in view of the fact of her testifying in Court that her signature "O. H." to **Notes of a Meeting** showed that "the article has my sanction and its accuracy," I feel justified in assuming that she has said, in effect at least, that "the advice, given only in a few special cases, was the only advice practicable." And yet Mrs. Besant says she disapproves of such advice, the only practicable advice, the advice to break off bad habits gradually, where to break them off completely at once was not possible. And I recollect one other simile given by Mrs. Besant, while in the U. S. A. in 1909. She said that Mr. Leadbeater's advice was similar to that given to a man addicted to drink who could not break away from the habit altogether, and hence was advised to lessen the amount gradually, but such advice, according to Mrs. Besant, is most mischievous and dangerous. In fact in her frantic attempt to defend Leadbeater by minimizing the seriousness of the actual charges against him, her own strong expressions of disapproval of his advice, so minimized, become ridiculous and a mere flurry of words.

Referring again to Mrs. Besant's letter of May 10, 1913, she says:

> The Magistrate, [before whom the alleged defamation cases were tried] then asserted, according to the telegram I have received, that I have approved of the advice given by Mr. Leadbeater. This statement is against the whole of the documentary and oral evidence given at the trial, and is not supported by one solitary fact. I appeal of course against it.

It appears from this that not for the world would Mrs. Besant have it supposed that she endorsed advice similar to that of giving to a man who had been poisoned by arsenic smaller doses in order to save his life, or persuading a drunkard to gradually lessen the amount of drink taken, in a case where he can not leave off all at once. Why, it would be terrible indeed for the public to imagine for a moment that Mrs. Besant might, could, would, or should endorse any such advice. In fact, proceeding a little further, in the same letter of May 10th, she says: (and I must ask pardon for sometimes repeating extracts more than once, but I do it out of consideration for Mrs. Besant who does not like any statement of hers to be "wrenched" from its context:)

> And I say again that while I honor Mr. Leadbeater's noble character and pure life, I regard the advice he gave in a few cases as most mischievous and dangerous. . . . The attempt to injure the T. S. by identifying it with this advice is shameful to all who descend to it, and as the President of the T. S., I once more strongly repudiate it.

Or defining the advice according to Mrs. Besant's own formula, the last sentence reads as follows:

> The attempt to injure the T. S. [her "Theosophical" Society] by identifying it with this advice [and Mrs. Besant clearly shows above that she means the advice which Mr. Leadbeater, according to her, actually gave "in a few cases"] The attempt to injure the T. S. by identifying it with this advice to break off evil habits gradually, where it is impossible to break them off all at once, is shameful to all who descend to it, and as President of the T. S., I once more strongly repudiate it. . . .

And she concludes her letter with these words:

> Meanwhile, dear friends, have patience and endure.
> Though the mills of God grind slowly
> Yet they grind exceedingly small.
> To His justice and His mercy I leave my persecutors and myself [my

persecutors who assert that I have approved the mischievous and dangerous advice to break off bad habits gradually when it is impossible to break them off at once] repeating the words said to have been spoken by the Christ: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

So Mrs. Besant appealed against the statement that she approved Mr. Leadbeater's advice; the Senior Presidency Magistrate having stated in rendering his judgment that

> Under these circumstances I hold that there is sufficient evidence to show that the complainant (Mrs. Besant) supported the Leadbeater practice.

The appeal was heard in the Madras High Court before Hon. Justice Ayling who upheld the previous judgment, finding no ground for further inquiry and dismissing the petition.

"Wrong" Applies to General Advice Only.

And one more statement from "Notes of a Meeting" referred to above. Mrs. Besant there declares:

> I have stated in my public letters to the T. S. [hers] that the advice given by Mr. Leadbeater, given only in a few special cases was the only advice practicable in those cases and he never offered it as general advice to boys, as has been falsely pretended. [Will Mrs. Besant say when, where and by whom this has been falsely pretended?] It was to the giving of it as general advice that Master's "wrong" applied, since that was what the Colonel (Olcott) wanted to know.

It is certainly very kind of Mrs. Besant to tell us what the Colonel really wanted to know, and to inform us what was in the Colonel's mind when he asked the question. She says, "And Masters always answer the thought in the mind of a questioner, not the mere words used." Since when did Mrs. Besant decide that this was the thought in the mind of Col. Olcott, since when did she decide it was her best policy to put this construction on his question and the answer received?

Why did not Mrs. Besant say at the time the statement was given out, that the "Master's" **wrong** applied only to the giving of the advice as general advice, and not to the very few cases in which, according to Mrs. Besant, Mr. Leadbeater did give the advice—though Leadbeater has acknowledged he gave it to "several." And if the "wrong" of such authority (assuming for the moment that Mrs. Besant's statement is correct both as to the authority and his words) applied only to the giving of the advice generally, the inference is that the "wrong" did not apply to the advice given by Mr. Leadbeater in those very few cases; and if not wrong, the inference is that such authority (which I believe Mrs. Besant recognizes as one of the very highest authorities)—that such authority held that the Leadbeater advice in those few cases was "right." If so, we have the interesting fact of Mrs. Besant's disapproval of advice, characterizing it as most mischievous and dangerous, which she declares this highest authority does not speak of as "wrong," and from which the inference is that in his judgment it was right. And yet although this highest authority's "wrong," applied only (according to Mrs. Besant) to the giving of the advice **generally**, we find her writing to the British members of her society on March 24, 1907,

> As regards his [Mr. Leadbeater's] readmission to the society. . . I shall continue to oppose it, as I have hitherto done, until he says publicly that the teaching is **wrong.** [Mrs. Besant herself italicises the word **"wrong."**]

She did, however, readmit him, and "with honor," without his publicly saying "the teaching is **wrong.**" Is not this fact of his readmission "with

honor" tantamount to an approval on her part of Mr. Leadbeater's teaching and advice and that in reality she held it was **not** wrong?

Declares Mrs. Besant Has No Excuse.

And note the letter just above quoted was written by Mrs. Besant nine months after she had received the official minutes of the committee's inquiry, and also after many letters had passed between her and Mr. Leadbeater; who himself says he concealed nothing from her; so she has no excuse to make that it was based on alleged false information,—an excuse which she made in regard to her writing a letter to certain members in America in 1906, from which I quote later. If she does make such excuse, does it not convict her of gross carelessness and lack of ordinary judgment, showing that she formed her conclusions on insufficient data, and with undue haste? In fact it is on a par with her entering on the alleged defamation suits, without having read the first sentence of the article in regard to which she made her complaint. The Magistrate in his judgment referring to this said:

> Further she admitted that her attention was drawn to the first sentence of the article in question, viz., "We have nothing to do with Theosophy," in this Court for the first time, during her cross-examination and not before. This admission speaks for itself and needs no comment.

Yet it was this very sentence that was one of the strongest points of the defense. Has not Mrs. Besant shown not only carelessness but incompetency, and a desire to defend her position at all costs? And yet she claims to be a "spiritual" Teacher, to be an Initiate (!) to have stood face to face with the Supreme Director of the Universe(!) and her followers proclaim her as soon to become one of the greatest rulers the world has ever known, "a ruler of Gods and men(!)—Ye gods, what next? And yet in spite of her own claims and those of her followers, she has to confess to blunder after blunder. In her autobiography she confesses to making blunders, and in November, 1908, she says:

> Both he [Leadbeater] and I have suffered by my blunder for which I have apologized to him, to an extent which our unmerciful critics little imagine; but it is over and never the shadow of a cloud can come between us again.

How very touching! How pathetic!

"The Only Advice Practicable," Says Mrs. Besant.

In **Notes of a Meeting,** Mrs. Besant says:

> I have stated in my public letter to the T. S. that the advice given by Mr. Leadbeater, given only in a few special cases was the only advice practicable.

which means that no other advice was practicable, and according to her own latest explanation the advice was merely the gradual breaking off an evil habit, like the giving of small doses of arsenic to a man poisoned by arsenic, in order to save his life, or like giving gradually reduced amounts of liquor to a man addicted to drinking. Does Mrs. Besant mean to say that she withholds her approval from this, from giving "the only advice practicable?" Does she not, by herself speaking of it as the "only advice practicable," and at another time repeating the simile used by Mr. Leadbeater of the arsenic and the giving of small doses "to save life," and by her own simile of the drunkard, does she not thereby virtually give her approval to the giving of the advice? Either that, or it does not show Mrs. Besant very resourceful in dealing with boys who have contracted bad habits. She refuses her approval to the giving of advice which she her-

self declares was "the only advice practicable," and which she likens to the giving of small doses for the saving of life; she has no other advice to offer; she says it was the only advice practicable; she claims to be a "spiritual" teacher, etc., etc., yet cannot offer anything better than advice she terms "most mischievous and dangerous," it was the only advice practicable. She is to become "one of the greatest rulers the world has ever known (!) ruler of Gods and men (!)" and yet cannot help a poor boy who is under the influence of a bad habit; she has nothing to offer in place of the Leadbeater advice, from the disapproval of which she declares she has not deviated one hair's breadth even though she readmitted him "with honor," but without his having declared "the teaching is wrong," which declaration she had pledged herself to insist upon. Oh, I should not say "pledged," I believe she merely wrote it in a letter, and I have no desire to do Mrs. Besant the least injustice. But she declares this advice which he gave in a very few cases was the only advice practicable. How little then must be the knowledge of human nature and human needs, possessed by this self-styled "initiate" this self-proclaimed "spiritual teacher."

Mrs. Besant Contradicted by Leadbeater

Third. Mrs. Besant declares that

> All that Mr. Leadbeater had done was to advise a very few boys who had fallen into bad habits and could not break them off at once to break them off gradually.

Let us turn to Mr. Leadbeater's own admissions and see if this is a correct statement of the facts.

In his reply dated February 27, 1906, to Mrs. Dennis' letter of January 25, 1906, containing the charges against him, which he wrote after consultation with Mrs. Besant, and which he showed to her before mailing it, in regard to one of the two boys mentioned by Mrs. Dennis, he admits that he tried "one experiment and only one" and that he did mention to the boy "that physical growth is frequently promoted by the setting in action of those currents, (this corroborates the statement of one of the boys as reported in Mrs. Dennis' letter) but that they needed regulation." Does this, on the face of it, support Mrs. Besant's contention that all that he had done was to advise a gradual breaking off from a bad habit? In his letter dated June 12, 1906, writing to Mrs. Besant, he says, "The boy who had previously engaged in undesirable practice was. . . (Mr. Leadbeater gives the initials). The logical inference from this is that the other boys had not engaged in undesirable practice, i. e., had not fallen into bad habits, and in this letter "the third boy" is mentioned, so that there are at least three boys here referred to. This then is a **distinct contradiction** to Mrs. Besant's statement that he gave advice only to those who had fallen into bad habits. In his letter to Mrs. Besant dated June 30, 1906, speaking of

> A natural function in man, capable if misused or uncontrolled, of leading to all kinds of excesses and sins. He says: The idea was to take it in hand before the age when it grew so strong as to be practically uncontrollable. . . . This, it was said [and Mr. Leadbeater is here referring to teachings which he alleges were given in a certain Church]—this it was said, and I think truly enough, would prevent the boy from turning his attention to the other sex, save him from any other temptation later towards prostitution and bring him to the time of his marriage (if he was to marry) without. . . . I have known cases in which that result was attained though I think the suggestion was intended chiefly for those who were expected to adopt a cellbate life as priests or monks. Of course you will understand that this sexual life was not made prominent, but was taken only as one point amidst a large number of directions for the regulation of the life. I know this to have worked well with many in Christian days, to have saved many boys from. . . . So when boys came specially under my care, I mentioned this matter to them among others, always trying to avoid any sort of false shame, and to make the whole thing appear as natural and simple as possible, though, of course, not a matter to be spoken of to others. . . . . The regularity is the preliminary step; it makes the whole thing a matter of custom instead of an irregular yielding to emotion, etc.

Is this the same as advising to break bad habits off gradually?

In a letter to Mrs. Besant dated September 11, 1906, Mr. Leadbeater writes, "you yourself (i. e., Mrs. Besant) though disapproving of the advice, spoke of it as at least better than that often given by doctors to young men." Is there any possible way in which the advice here referred to can be taken as advice "to break off bad habits gradually?" And if "better," does not this imply at least a partial approval on Mrs. Besant's part?

The "Leadbeater Advice" Far More Serious.

Mrs. Besant's statement that "All that Mr. Leadbeater had done was to advise a very few boys who had fallen into bad habits and could not break them off at once to break them off gradually," is thus absolutely contradicted by Mr. Leadbeater himself in the extracts from his letters just given. It is plain that the "Leadbeater advice," as it has been called, is somthing very different from and far more serious than Mrs. Besant's latest explanation of it, and I think that all plain honest folk, who believe in the old-fashioned morality advocated in the simple teachings of all the great religions of the world, yes advocated in the law of Moses as well as conformable with "the spirit of the Buddha, the Christ," (Mrs. Besant will doubtless know wherefrom I quote) will agree in saying that in 1906 when she wrote her letter to certain members in America, Mrs. Besant was much nearer the truth, and showed much more the dignity of true womanhood than she has in her later utterances on this subject. She wrote this letter just after receiving the report of the Committee of Inquiry before which Mr. Leadbeater confessed to having given the advice and also to "touch," and to "having thus dealt with boys before puberty as a prophylactic." In this letter Mrs. Besant writes:

> It was conceivable that the advice as supposed to have been given with pure intent, and the presumption was so in a teacher of Theosophical morality; anything else seemed incredible. But such advice as was given, in fact dealing with boys before sex passion had awakened, could be given with pure intent only if the giver were, on this point, insane. . . Let me here place on record my opinion that such teachings as this given to men, let alone innocent boys, is worthy of the sternest reprobation. It distorts and perverts the sex impulse, implanted in men for the preservation of the race; it degrades the ideas of marriage, of fatherhood and motherhood, humanity's most sacred ideals; it befouls the imagination, pollutes the emotions, and undermines the health. Worst of all is that it should be taught under the name of the Divine Wisdom, being essentially "earthly, sensual, devilish."

Mrs. Besant recently referred to a longer extract from this letter as "garbled." If it in any way misrepresents her, then let her publish the whole, but the extract given is at least sufficient to show her attitude at that time to what she then professed to believe was the Leadbeater advice, evidently something very different from what she **now** professes to believe it to have been. And if Mrs. Besant had maintained that attitude in regard to the Leadbeater advice she would have had on this point the respect of all good men and women.

But, **mirabile dictu**, Mrs. Besant has practically repudiated the letter from which I have just quoted, and why? Is it that she realizes the in-

congruity between her outspoken condemnation then and her present attempt to minimize the Leadbeater advice almost to the vanishing point? In her reply to "An Open Letter" to Mrs. Annie Besant from the Catholic Associations of India and Burma, published in the **Madras Standard**, July 28, 1913, her reply being dated July 29, 1913, Mrs. Besant says:

> I regret that you misquoted my garbled letter, but it is not worth while to do more than say that the words you quote, "earthly," etc., were not applied to the advice given in two or three cases to rescue boys who had fallen into evil ways. I disagree strongly with the advice but these words were applied to other matters which were subsequently shown to be falsely charged.

Mr. Fussell Agrees With Mrs. Besant For Once.

It is certainly a pleasure to be able to agree with one, at least, of Mrs. Besant's statements, and I do indeed believe she is speaking the truth in saying that the words " 'earthly,' etc., were not applied to the advice given in two or three cases to rescue boys who had fallen into evil ways." In fact, if we look again at the extract given above from her letter in which these words occur, we shall find that they do admirably apply, not to Mrs. Besant's most recent explanation of the Leadbeater advice, but to the actual advice itself, and we shall, I feel sure, conclude that Mrs. Besant's words "earthly, sensual, devilish," were well chosen and well merited, as has been shown by the extracts given from his own letters and his own description of the advice with the giving of which he was charged, such charge being supported by hitherto uncontroverted evidence and statements, such as the affidavit of the boy D. P., the statements of Mr. Burrows, Mrs. Dennis, and Dr. van Hook; and Leadbeater himself having confessed to having given the advice and employed "touch" which at the very least means "indecent assault." This last acknowledgment of Leadbeater's is another corroboration of the testimony of one of the boys, viz., of the boy D. P. as given in his affidavit. Thus Mr. Leadbeater corroborates two of the statements made by boys, viz., that he said the practice would promote physical growth, and as to "touch." To the latter he confessed before the Committee of Inquiry presided over by Col. Olcott, and when asked by Col. Olcott: "I should like to ask Mr. Leadbeater if he thinks I have acted impartially," Mr. Leadbeater replied, "Absolutely." And in his letter to Mrs. Besant of May 17, 1906, he said, "Many of the Committee seemed friendly towards me."

Well might Hon. Justice Bakewell say of Mr. Leadbeater's opinions that they are "immoral," and that he is "unfit to be the tutor of boys" and is a "dangerous associate for children." And well might Mr. Narayaniah, the father of Krishnamurti and Nityananda, seek to remove his two boys from all association with such a man, and to revoke the guardianship of Mrs. Besant who so persistently has tried to shield him. If he is a man of noble character and pure life as Mrs. Besant declares; if, as she once said, he is an English gentleman, then let him refuse any longer to shelter himself behind a woman's skirts. If the boy D. P. and Mr. Burrows and Mrs. Dennis, and others have spoken falsely, let **him** disprove their statements, not merely deny, but disprove them, and so clear his name if he can.

A "Theosophical Worthy."

There is one historical fact that I believe has not been mentioned in connection with these "alleged defamation" cases, though I have elsewhere spoken of it in connection with the Leadbeater advice, and to some it may appear to have some close connection. In the March 1910 issue of her magazine, **The Theosophist**, Mrs. Besant under the heading "Theosophical Worthies" wrote a eulogy of Alexander Fullerton, who up to about a year or so previously had been the highest official of her society in America, since Mrs. Besant had been repudiated by the original Theosophical Society under William Q. Judge, in whose hands the direction of the work had been left by Mme. Blavatsky. This eulogy of Alexander Fullerton was published in the March issue of the Theosophist. On the 18th of the preceding month, February, however, this same "Theosophical(!) Worthy" was arrested in New York by the acting Post Office Inspector for sending through the mails objectionable and obscene letters to a boy, (and they are outrageous in their vileness, and would make the blood of any true man or woman boil with indignation). Fullerton acknowledged the letters as his, was brought before the Federal Courts and held for trial. In the meantime, however, evidently to save him from his embarrassment, his friends were able to get him adjudged insane and he was committed to an Asylum for the Insane. But this is not all.

At about the very time Fullerton was writing these letters, in 1909, Mrs. Besant was then on her lecture tour in the U. S. A. and called to see him as he was ill and confined to his room. Now Mrs. Besant claims to be clairvoyant, to be able to read past incarnations through thousands of years and to see thousands of years ahead, even to predict a "Coming Christ" and to read auras. Where then was her alleged wonderful knowledge that she could not foresee the disgrace that was to come to her devoted follower, her "Theosophical Worthy," and through him to her society? Where at such a time of crisis, was her "Master" whom she claims directs her affairs and the affairs of her society. In view of this, is not her claim to read past incarnations, etc., etc. absurd and preposterous? And does not the Fullerton incident add to the necessity of giving warning regarding the Leadbeater advice, which Dr. van Hook says is to be introduced into the world? And there are some who will not cease to utter warning against these things in order that innocent youth may be protected even if in so doing they should happen to offend Mrs. Besant, and hurt her feelings.

Is it not clear why Mrs. Besant seeks to wilify the **Theosophic Voice** and the Point Loma "tracts." Their statements have not been and cannot be controverted. They are a continual protest against the Leadbeater advice and teachings, against Mrs. Besant's support and endorsement of Leadbeater, and against her posing as a "Theosophical" Teacher. For Theosophy countenances none of these things.

I was just about to conclude this when I learned from the **Madras Standard** of September 22nd, of the establishment by members of Mrs. Besant's society of an Indian hotel in London, and that a Committee of these members would welcome Indian youths arriving in England. The question arises, has this been done under advice and instructions from Mr. Leadbeater, and does he have anything to do with the management and direction thereof? Some will perhaps be interested to know.

Faithfully yours,

Point Loma, California.
November 1, 1913.

JOSEPH H. FUSSELL.

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